

Us-Iran Nuclear Deal Under Trump's Administration:

By

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Abstract:

The international community believe that Iran has been covertly trying to develop nuclear weapons which will upset the regional balance of power. IAEA in its report published in 2011 stated that Iran might acquire nuclear weapons by the end of 2020 if it continues on the speed it is going now. Based on this report, USA and Israel hyped up the fears of a nuclear Armageddon and Washington lobbied hard to impose sanctions on Iran. These sanctions were meant to impede the progress of Tehran to acquire nuclear weapons but the same proved to be counterproductive. Donald Trump who can be quoted as a realistic president abrogated the JCPOA during July 2018. The deal was one of the main foreign policy objectives of President Trump presidential campaigns. The deal was a game changer especially for Iran. President Trump while quoting the Iran agreement said "it is the worst deal that the United States of America had ever made". Many internal and foreign elements played crucial role to cancel the US-Iran nuclear deal. Most importantly President Trump himself see the agreement in the favour of Iran. He believed that this deal will not stop Iran from going nuclear. He also argued that Iran is buying more time to get more sophisticated technology to proliferate nuclear rich uranium. Further, the role of Saudi Arabia as a major economic partner of the United States of America is also of the major importance. On the other hand, the State of Israel was not in the favour of the deal. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu successfully manipulated the Israel lobby which holds a strong say in the foreign policy making of the United States of America. Altogether these elements led to the cancellation of the US-Iran nuclear deal.

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Introduction:

JCPOA was finalized on July 14, 2015 in Vienna Austria. The deal was a final settlement between Iran and the P5+1 States. Formal arrangements for the deal on Iran's atomic program started with the acceptance of the "Joint Plan of Action" an interim agreement marked between Iran and the P5+1 in November 2013. The negotiations continued to subsequent twenty months between P5+1 states and Iran and in April 2015 they agreed on the outline for the deal for the final deal. Iran and the P5+1 concluded the final interim agreement in July 2015.

The deal was considered as one of the biggest diplomatic victory of President Obama and the entire world stood behind USA. However, the new US President totally altered US foreign policy which led to the dissolution of JCPOA as far as US was concerned. The international politics has been altered since then. The Middle Eastern dynamics have also been altered and the threat of an armed conflict between USA and Iran is ever present.

The Middle East region can ill-afford destabilising conflicts which involve violent extremism, proxy warfare, and nuclear proliferation. The United States has controlled Iran's nuclear programme through successful application of soft power. Iran's possible return to the mainstream community i.e. opening trade and diplomatic relations, after the nuclear deal, has caused escalation in Arab concerns and Saudi-Iranian tensions. Iran and Saudi Arabian tensions escalate with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 that was direct involvement in the region's power dynamics.

However, when the US pulled out in 2011, it left behind a power vacuum. As a result of subsiding US hegemony, a balance of power started taking shape in the region between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the regional security context, the Iran nuclear deal was in favour of Middle East Countries especially for Saudi's because Saudi takes Iran as a major security challenge for him. Iran becoming as a nuclear power will pull the other major powers of the Middle East that is Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Israel into security dilemma of becoming nuclear power specially for Saudi Arabia which is also a geo strategic rival of each other. This situation calls for a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The implementation process of nuclear safety and security under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) provides an opportunity to regional states to move towards an inclusive regional forum. There needs to

be a complex and multi-layered cooperative framework to reduce the region's vulnerability to shifting geopolitical preferences within and beyond and improve regional stability.

Trump decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal has created a new conflict in the region, as well as with the US allies particularly with the EU (European Union) countries. Most of the European Union countries wanted to stay with the deal. For the time being the United States wants to pressurize Iran through economic sanctions in order to limit the role of Iran in the region that the US does not like. At the same time Iran will continue to play its role in the region as it has played during the tough sanctions earlier. And if the deal does, in fact, fall apart well, then Donald Trump a stark choice: either let Iran toward nuclear Bomb or go to war to try to stop it.

Theoretical Approach:

If it is seen all the states achieve nuclear power keeping in view the Classical Realism. First reason of the achieving of nuclear weapons is the security threats. Countries to secure their sovereignty chose the option of non-Proliferation. Second, the attainment of nuclear weapons is for national interests. Third, to create deterrence against monopoly of enemy country. Fourth, lust of power and desire to be hegemonic gives impetus to attain WMD. These all conditions fit on the Iranian nuclear program. Iranian nuclear program is to end the monopoly of Israel. She desires promoting its ideology in region for attainment of national interests. Next Iran aspires to provide mammoth support to Shiites against Sunni governments of Arab States.

To best understand the implications of US-Iran nuclear deal we need to apply theory here. Classical Realism is a theory of realism school of thought that can best explain and predicts. The main writers of this school of thoughts are Thucydides and Hans's j Morgenthau, these both authors believe that human nature plays a vital role in international politics because states are comprised by the individuals and the desires for power is to be found in human nature as Thucydides said "The drivers for control and will to overwhelm are held to be basic part of human instinct". Established pragmatist additionally contend that it is from nature of man that the basic highlights of worldwide governmental issues, for example, rivalry, dread and war can be clarified.

Moreover, classical realist talks about the adherent beliefs in primordial character of power and ethics. Further they argued that patriotic virtues are required with the end goal for groups to make due in this noteworthy fight amongst great and underhandedness. If we see US-Iran deal and its implication for Israel through this lens, there is competition for power between these two countries. Both Iran and Israel are utilizing patriotism to unite their people. Furthermore, they both have a fear from one another which can be witnessed in the speeches of the leaders from both sides.

Iran-US Relations: A See-Saw Relationship:

Prior to the revolution of 1979, Iran and the US had a hand in glove type of relationship. Iran along with Saudi Arabia was the second pillar of the US' two pillar policy in the Middle East. The US played a vital role in cementing the rule of Raza Shah Pahlavi and the coup of 1953 is the testimony to this fact. Shah reciprocated this favour by providing economic support to the US. However, the revolution of 1979 brought an end to this cordial relationship.

As far as the economic favors are concerned, Shah showed keen interest in buying arsenal from the US. Iran by the 1970s actually became the biggest arms importer of the US. Shah with this approach paved way for the Iranian oil in the US in general and the military arenas of the US in particular. On the political front Shah started questioning the legitimacy of the nationalist movements. Furthermore, the regimes that were hostile against the US witnessed destabilization because of the efforts of Shah. The US' interests were hence guarded in the Middle East.

In the 1970s Shah exploited his military prowess to bring an end to the opposition from the guerilla forces in Dhofar. In the year 1972 Shah extended help to the US and Israel to disturb the stable Iraqi government. Their trio supported the Kurd rebels in Iraq. However, this cooperation did not remain for the very long time as Iran was witnessed the fervor of Islamic revolution. With this revolution the era of an endless journey of animosity between the US and Iran began. Despite the US' efforts the old order in the Middle East could not be maintained.

The US policy towards a middle east took a U-turn after the overthrow of pro-US shah government in Iran. The Shah served as a US watchman in Middle East and served the interests of his masters in USA. However, after the brutal takeover of Shah Government by Shiite Islamists, the US had to take a direct role in Middle Eastern politics. Since then, US had to take over direct role in this region. USA is now the biggest influencer in the region

and the largest security provider also. Interestingly, Tehran which once was the US bogymen in Middle East is its greatest rival in the region.

Obama was always accused by neo-cons inside US of being soft on Muslims and Islamic fundamentalism. In a Cairo speech addressed, Obama stressed that the modern world has a lot to thank the Muslim scholars and scientists of middle ages whose contributions led to the development of modern sciences, arts, architecture and advancements in medicine. He also stressed the need of closed cooperation with the Islamic world to suppress extremism and fundamentalism from the world. Obama also advocated the innovative ideas which are required to suppress the simmering tensions in the region. He also hinted on starting a new era of cooperation in the Middle East to stop the spread of nuclear weapons in the region.

The US rhetoric towards Iran changed from hard to soft after the arrival of moderate government in Iran and international government seemed hopeful of a breakthrough in US-Iranian ties. The importance of Obama's shift in rhetoric, however, must be understood. In the history of US-Iran relations there had been little direct confrontation between the two countries. The most historic moment which took place during Obama era was the signing of JCPOA deal.

After the continuous negotiations among P5+1 and Iran, JCPOA deal was concluded which comprises of 109 pages with five annexes. Under this deal, Iran would have been allowed to pursue atom for peace program but not the weapons program. This deal was considered landmark since it almost averted nuclear proliferation in an entire region. However, as usual Israel and neo-cons inside USA opposed this deal since Israel wanted sureties that Iran would not continue its nuclear program secretly. President Trump on the desire of Israel and to the shock of the entire world ended this deal which has exacerbated tensions in the region.

The Obama regime invested a lot in the diplomatic realm of the JCPOA. It came across major political confrontation at home because of the nuclear agreement. Despite all the obstacles, the JCPOA became a reality and thus proved to be a huge diplomatic success of President Obama. However, it somehow became notorious as it was considered to be controversial as well. This deal sows the seeds of rift among the congress members and the Republicans openly opposed it.

Back in 2016 not just Donald Trump (the then republican candidate for the presidential elections) but other Republicans also stood against this deal. Renowned Republican Senator Ted Cruz, threatened to tear off the agreement as soon as he joins office. Furthermore, the agreement did not receive a warm welcome in the Middle East. Israeli authorities showed their

disgust on this deal. Similarly, Saudi Arabia became unhappy with the deal as she thought this deal to undermine its security.

President Trump always remained a staunch opponent of the JCPOA deal. He was one of the staunchest critiques of the nuclear deal with Iran. President Trump within two years of taking office pulled out USA from JCPOA. He wants to achieve multiple purposes from this deal. First and foremost, purpose of the revocation of the deal is to re-impose crippling economic sanctions on Iran. The second major purpose of the deal is to prevent the European companies from doing businesses inside Iran and prevent Iranian companies from doing the same. The third major purpose of the revocation of the deal is to impose economic sanctions on major Iranian personalities and government organs which have assets abroad.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action:

JCPOA was the result of the talks between Iran and the P5+1. It is a long document which is comprised of 109 pages and five annexes. The crux of this document is to give right of peaceful enrichment of radioactive elements to Iran. In addition to this, it was concluded that Iran would not quest for the attainment of nuclear weapons. The following discussion is going to discuss the JCPOA in detail.

The statistics state that Iran has in total 19,000 centrifuges. Out of this number 10,000 were spinning. However, the deal demanded Iran to reduce these spinning centrifuges to 5060. These 5060 centrifuges could be indulged in enrichment (about 3.67%) for the coming fifteen years. Under this agreement Iran was not allowed to continue with its uranium enrichment. Furthermore, Iran was also asked to reduce its reserves of Uranium from 10,000 kg to 300 kg for a particular period.

Nuclear Deal and its Implications for Iran:

Iran since the dawn of the 21st century desired to have its own nuclear weapons program due to multifaceted reasons. Iran considered itself cornered after the Bush regime called it axis of evil. The US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq reinforced Iranian fears that it's the next target of US aggression. The rising Israeli prowess and the dwindling Middle Eastern states exacerbated the security problems for Tehran. The acquiring of nuclear weapons by Pakistan was also a shock for Iran which considered itself racially and culturally superior to the former. Since 2001, Iran has been striving to develop nuclear weapons.

According to sources, rogue elements in North Korea assisted Iran in acquiring centrifuges which enabled it to enrich the uranium to the level required to construct nuclear weapons. The crippling and total economic

sanctions on Iran did not deter it from pursuing its ambitions of becoming a nuclear state. Israel tried its utmost to deny Iran this capability. Several Iranian nuclear scientists were murdered in Europe and Asia. Independent observers accuse Israel of these murders. Israel also used cyber-attacks to destroy Iranian nuclear set ups. Despite these, Iran continued to pursue its nuclear weapons program.

President Obama came up with an ambitious plan to at least halt the Iranian nuclear program at least for a decade during which economic benefits were to be used to convince Iran to abandon its desire of nuclear weapons. However, the opponents of this deal argued that this deal is a win-win situation for Iran since it would allow to continue its nuclear weapons program unabated while also allowing it to flex its conventional muscle. Iran soon after signing this historic deal flexed its proxy muscle in Iraq and Syria and used this to strengthen Hezbollah and other militias inside Lebanon.

Trumps Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal:

In May 2018, USA pulled out of Iran nuclear deal which was signed by his predecessor Barak Obama which eased economic and military sanctions on Iran. President Trump stated that the two states have been unable to reach an agreement and that the US would no longer participate in JCPOA and would impose economic and other sanctions on Tehran. However, the US President provided a number of options which if followed by all JCPOA member states might lead to a renegotiated deal with Iran. Some of the important points of the proposed conditions by USA are that firstly Iran must cease and reverse all military dimensions of its nuclear program. Secondly, Iran must close its heavy water reactor and that IAEA would have unlimited access to the Iranian nuclear sites. Thirdly, Iran is to close its missile program. Fourthly, Iran is to release all US citizens and human rights activists detained in Iran. Lastly, Iran is to end its support for proxies like Hezbollah and Iraqi Shiite militias.

A neutral assessment of these demands by USA to reconsider its stance on JCPOA indicates that these conditions would never be acceptable to Iran. Iran has learned from the Iraqi experience where it allowed IAEA unlimited access to its nuclear facilities and it shunned all of its chemical weapons but the USA still went ahead with the invasion of the country. Secondly Iran uses missiles as tools to deter USA from attacking its facilities in Persian Gulf and inside Iranian main land. Moreover, Iran can never abandon its proxies in Middle East at the mercy of Israel since these provide it leverage over its enemies in the region.

USA has also demanded that Iran must withdraw its troops from Syria before it could be offered any chances of entering into a deal. This demand is also illogical and Iran would never abandon its Syrian ally since it would be suicidal for Iran itself. Hence, independent observers opine that this deal is done and dusted since both the states are not willing to compromise from their principle stance. The USA exit from JCPOA attracted criticism from its allies inside Europe. The remaining parties to the agreement assert that USA cannot unilaterally withdraw from this agreement and re impose sanctions on Iran.

The U.S. exit from the JCPOA attracted broad criticism among the other parties to the JCPOA. The other JCPOA parties assert that unilateral U.S. re-imposition of sanctions appears to violate the JCPOA. The agreement requires that a noncompliance notification to the U.N. Security Council, which would be necessary to trigger the re-imposition of U.N. sanctions, be accompanied by “a description of the good-faith efforts the participant made to exhaust the dispute resolution process specified in this JCPOA.” The agreement also states that the P5+1 and Iran “commit to implement this JCPOA in good faith and in a constructive atmosphere, based on mutual respect, and to refrain from any action inconsistent with the letter, spirit and intent of this JCPOA that would undermine its successful implementation.” Whether this course of action violates UNSCR 2231 is unclear. U.S. officials have argued that the JCPOA is not legally binding. But a European Union official told CRS in a November 30, 2016, email that “the commitments under the JCPOA have been given legally binding effect through UNSC Resolution 2231 (2015).” Other P5+1 countries immediately reiterated their support for the JCPOA and announced that they intend to fulfil their JCPOA commitments and protect their companies from the effects of any U.S.-imposed sanctions. In a joint statement, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom declared their intention to remain party to the JCPOA and to “work with all the remaining parties” to the deal to ensure that Iran continues to receive “the continuing economic benefits ... linked to the agreement.”

Trumps Withdrawal from Iran’s Nuclear Deal: Economics’ or Security?

Iran stated on 1st July that it had violated a part of the Iran Nuclear Deal by allowing its stockpile of low-enriched uranium to exceed 300kg. The move is a carefully calibrated and reversible step intended to put pressure on Europe to do more to help mitigate the effect of crippling US sanctions. UK, France and Germany have resisted calls for imposing sanctions. Last Friday,

the EU announced that it had set up its long planned EU-Iran trading mechanism, Instex, and said the first transactions had been completed. Instex is a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to enable European businesses to maintain non-dollar trade with Iran without breaking U.S. sanctions. That SPV, known as INSTEX (Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges), is now up and running.

GCC & Revocation of Iran Nuclear Deal:

Gulf Cooperation Council countries have historically been part of the Sunni dominant belt. From the times of pious Caliphs to the Ottoman Empire, this area enjoyed prominence due to the presence of Islamic holy sites in the vicinity. After the end of WW11, this region gained independence from the British rule. However, they did not have any significant role to play in global politics. However, all of this changed after the discovery of oil in this region. GCC is now one of the major economic powerhouses in the world. GCC since its formation has been under the Saudi influence due to its size and economy.

Hence, GCC shares common security concerns as Saudi Arabia and has been opposed to Iranian influence in the region and beyond. Many of the GCC countries such as Bahrain have significant Shiite population and face unrest every now and then. USA has important military bases in GCC countries from where it controls the oil trade and supply its military bases in Iraq and Syria. The US enmity towards Iran is shared by GCC countries as well. All of these nations oppose Iranian nuclear weapons program and do not consider it useful to their security interests in the region.

The recent GCC-Qatar split has led to the increase of Iranian influence in GCC with Qatar becoming an important Iranian partner in the region. However, Qatar opposes a nuclear Iran since Qatar has been supporter of nuclear non-proliferation in the region and beyond. Other GCC countries are also opposed to a nuclear Iran since they consider it detrimental to their cultural and ideological identities and security. GCC has always looked towards USA for the provision of security. Pakistan is also an important security provider in the GCC.

GCC has been opposed to Iran in greater Middle East. GCC supported Syrian rebels while Iran supports the Syrian government. This has created a wedge between GCC and Iran which has been further widened after the Yemen civil war. Hence it can be stated that GCC is opposed to Iran due to multifaceted reasons and a nuclear Iran is the last thing which GCC would want

Policy Options for Iran:

President Trump says he wants to make sure Iran never acquires nuclear weapons. His foreign policy towards Iran, however, is having the opposite effect: it is giving Iran a powerful incentive to go nuclear. Iranian authorities recently announced that the country had breached limits for enriched uranium imposed on it by the 2015 IAEA and international agreements.

Although there has not yet been a major military clash, the Trump administration has effectively declared war on Iran in terms of strong economic sanctions. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, has also declared that Iran must fundamentally alter its foreign policy in ways that suits the interests of United States of America and its allies in the Middle East. He added that, our military are prepared to protect our interests and personal in the region. We will continue to oppose malign Iranian interests.

By imposing what it calls the “Maximum Pressure” the Trump Administration is threatening Iran’s survival as a sovereign state. Importantly Mr. President is likely to retaliate and further escalate the pressure on Iran. Trump aim is to establish deterrence with Iran and force it to capitulate. But these measures will have opposite result in a classic escalatory spiral.

The United States is certainly not going to invade and occupy Iran so that to ensure that it does not go nuclear. Hard liners in the United States will instead provoke bombing Iran’s nuclear facilities, however, the Iranians authorities will go to great lengths to make their nuclear facilities invulnerable to aerial attacks.

For obvious reason the Iranian authorities do not trust President Trump, and they surely recognize he might eventually walk away from any deal they strike with him. Furthermore Mr. Trump’s policy has backed United States into a corner, leaving no clear diplomatic off-ramp in sight.

Iran Response to Mr. Trump Foreign Policy:

There is no clear evidence that Iran is likely to capitulate to the demands of the United States of America. The historical record analyse that great powers can put enormous pressure on their adversaries with blockades sanctions, sieges, and campaigns and yet the pain rarely causes target states to surrender. In fact, the Iranian authorities already shown that they will not sit by a second while its citizens die and their society is wrecked.

The Iranians are likely to launch more secrets operations that damages the interests of the United States of America through its Shia proxies in the Persian Gulf. Iran's stance on the nuclear weapons is clear they believe that purpose of nuclear weapons is ultimate deterrent for good reason. One of the main arguments of Iran regarding going nuclear is, adversaries are unlikely to threaten the existence of a nuclear armed state. Finally, the ultimate policy option for Iran is to wait out the Trump Presidency, hoping that democrats win the 2020 election. Interestingly, all the democrats are committed to returning the United States of America to the nuclear deal that was sign by Obama Administration.

Conclusion:

Iran is an oil rich country situated in the Middle East and along one of the busiest Sea Line of Communication the Persian Gulf. Iran is rich in oil, gas and minerals and has a rich history and culture. It is the house of Shiite Islam, the second largest sect within Islam. Since 1979 revolution, Islamic hardliners rule this country and its relations with the west have remained strained since then. Iran has been in search of security especially since the Iran-Iraq war. Iran's relationship with Israel is also very hostile and the nuclear armed Jewish state is perceived as the main threat by the Iranian regime.

Moreover, gulf countries also view Iran with suspicion due to their ideological differences and Iran's rich fuel reserves which are a competition for Arab oil and gas. GCC countries work in synch with USA to isolate Iran. USA is the arch rival of Iran and the rivalry between the two has economic and military dimensions. All these reasons along with Iranian concept of hegemony over others have led it to pursue its nuclear weapons program. International community imposed sanctions on Iran to prevent it from achieving this objective. However, Iran continued to pursue its nuclear ambitions.

The factors behind US withdrawal from the nuclear deal have been discussed in detail in this dissertation eg the Israeli pressure or the US distastes for Iranian involvement in Syria and Iraq. The implications of the cancellation of this deal which include the nuclear proliferation in Middle East have been discussed in detail in this thesis. The question of regional instability in the wake of nuclear Iran has also been discussed in great detail in this thesis. This dissertation has been compiled with sincerity and zest and with an aim to discuss the threats to regional peace and security from nuclear proliferation and ways to counter them to make this world a safe

place. The author will be pleased if this dissertation has been helpful to academicians, scholars, journalists, students and strategists.

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